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"ECCE HOMO!"

HELPFUL EXAMINATIONS
OF CONSCIENCE FOR
MONTHLY AND ANNUAL
RETREATS
FOR RELIGIOUS



1940

SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS
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I.

On the Aim of our Holy Vocation and the Striving for Perfection

1. Am I penetrated with the truth that God Himself out of an especial love has called me to the religious life? That He has bestowed upon me the grace to overcome obstacles and temptations and that I owe it to Him that I have persevered in my holy state until the present time?
2. Do I believe and acknowledge that God has thereby granted me an extraordinary favor and has given an especial proof of love?
3. Do I often thank God for this favor, or am I, when I meet with difficulties and humiliations, so ungrateful that I no longer look upon my vocation as a favor? Perhaps consider people in the world more happy and even yield to the desire to return to the world?
4. Do I often, especially during the monthly retreat, ponder well the aim of my holy vocation, which consists in a more perfect life?

5. Do I spend the day of the monthly retreat in the appointed manner? Do I earnestly seek to avoid every distraction? Do I reflect earnestly upon the resolutions which I formed during the annual retreat and the points which made a special impression on me?
6. In what way do I think about my duty to strive after perfection? Do I esteem and love religious perfection?
7. Am I really firmly resolved to avoid all that displeases God and to do all that He desires of me?
8. Do I give practical proof of this resolution in my demeanor by never voluntarily violating my holy vows, the holy rule, not even the customs of the community? However if I should fail out of weakness, do I at once make up for it by sincere contrition and humility?
9. Do I faithfully make use of the means which aid the striving after perfection? Candor toward my Superior? Humble uprightness in Chapter? Zealous preparation for the reception of the Holy Sacraments? Esteem for the spiritual exercises, the works of charity and the occupations which are assigned to me?

10. Am I faithful in little things? Do I perform the little works of penance with the purpose of atoning for my sins and of becoming better?
11. Do I strive earnestly to fulfill the twofold obligation of my vocation: prayer and work? Do I ever neglect the occupations assigned to me in order to give myself to prayer and exercises of devotion? Or do I let myself be so occupied with external affairs that I thereby lose the spirit of prayer?
12. Have I preserved my first fervor? On the day of holy profession I was so happy that nothing seemed to be able to prove too difficult for me. Do I still think so?
13. Do I constantly strive to advance in perfection by zealously making use of the opportunities for self-abnegation and self-control? Or do I always postpone this to a later time? If during the years I have lived in the Order I had devoted myself to a science or art, I certainly would have made considerable progress in it. Have I, in the same degree, made progress in the science of the saints, in perfection?
14. Have I not often let Jesus Christ knock in vain at the door of my heart by refusing Him a sacrifice or tolerating some attachment in my heart?

15. Am I watchful over myself in order to control the first movements of my inordinate inclinations? Do I direct my attention especially to that inclination which most hinders my progress?
16. Do I each morning form sincere and determined resolutions, and do I renew them in the course of the day?
17. Do I give way to sadness or dejection when I have fallen into a fault or when my attention is called to one?
18. Do I beg God for the grace of an active zeal for my perfection?

II.

On Obedience

1. How is it with regard to my religious obedience? Do I esteem and love it as an excellent, necessary and useful virtue?
2. Do I zealously seek opportunities of practicing obedience or do I on the contrary endeavor to escape from it in order to follow my own will?
3. Do I obey from love or from force? Only because I must or because I fear I may be punished or reprimanded for my disobedience?
4. In the practice of obedience do I seek to become like my Divine Model, Jesus Christ, Who came down from Heaven, not to do His own will but the will of Him Who had sent Him; Who was subject, not only to His holy parents but also to His unjust judges, His enemies and executioners, and even to the death on the cross?
5. Am I deeply penetrated with the teaching of the saints, that the practice of obedience contains in itself the practice of all the other virtues?

6. Do I understand well the great advantage of this virtue? Obedience causes the religious who sincerely loves and practices it to enjoy continual contentment and peace of heart; it gives her the victory over temptations, makes her, as it were, incapable of sinning, puts her in the state of always doing what is pleasing to God, of being able to appear without fear before His tribunal, and of acquiring the richest merits for Heaven.
7. Do I bear in mind that I as a religious am in duty bound to obey my Superiors and the holy rule?
8. Do I obey in the spirit of faith, that is, do I see God Himself in my Superiors and in all whom He has placed over me; thus I obey for the sake of God, for the sake of Jesus Christ Himself, Whom they represent.
9. Therefore do I perform or do I omit equally all that is commanded or forbidden, should it appear to me agreeable or disagreeable, reasonable or purposeless, useful or absurd?
10. Do I also obey all who are placed over me, or to whom any authority over me has been given?
11. Do I cherish for my Superiors and all who have been placed over me, sincere interior and

exterior reverence and love? Do I immediately cast out every thought against this reverence and love? Have I spoken about the faults and weaknesses which I imagined I observed in my Superiors?

12. Have I obeyed more out of regard for the person of the Superior than for the one to whom authority has been given by God? Do I even obey only to please my Superiors, in order thereby to obtain some privilege, or to be praised or especially loved by them or others?
13. Am I convinced that obedience is the more agreeable to God and the more meritorious, the more humble the dignity is of that one whom I obey?
14. Am I less obedient because the Sister to whom I have been assigned for work and who has been placed over me, has not been in the Order as long as I, or in my opinion, is not prudent, mild and virtuous?
15. How do I take admonitions, reproofs and penances on the part of my Superiors? Do I bear in mind that Jesus Christ Himself gives them to me? Have I even excused myself with impetuosity, disrespect, or perhaps at the cost of the truth?

16. How have I conducted myself regarding the golden rule: Desire nothing, refuse nothing? Did I endeavor to practice holy indifference in everything? With regard to the house where I work, the Superiors who have been placed over me, the occupations assigned me? Further with regard to health or illness, dryness or consolation, life or death? Have I immediately repressed every thought and desire conflicting with this holy indifference?
17. Have I interested myself in or been concerned about the affairs of another, where I was not in duty bound? Meddled with matters which do not concern me? Alluded to them in my speech?
18. Have I without being bound thereto by my position or being charged by my Superior, given commands or admonitions to another?
19. Have I made no distinction in the commands of the Superiors or the precepts of the holy rule by conscientiously fulfilling all? Or do I observe only that which seems to me greater and more important, and neglect those which I consider smaller and more trifling? Do I consider well that he who is negligent in little things falls by degrees into great transgressions?

20. Do I strive for the virtue of perfect obedience, that is, do I obey promptly, accurately, cheerfully and simply?
21. Have I obeyed promptly, immediately carried out what was commanded? Have I postponed it although I knew that the Superiors desired its prompt execution? Did I not first finish the work which I had just at hand because it suited me or I had a particular liking for it? Do I follow the first sound of the bell, so that I never, out of negligence, come too late for the community exercises? Nor let those wait who wish to speak to me?
22. Is my obedience punctual or exact? Do I do everything as I should and as I know that it meets the wishes and intentions of the Superior? Have I done my work only half and hastily in order to be rid of it? Have I, against the will of the Superior, regulated it according to my own ideas?
23. Is my obedience also exact at the time when my Superior or Sisters do not see me? Have I performed negligently and inexactly the tasks which were not seen?
24. Do I dispense myself from the duty of obeying punctually under the pretext that I have been so long in the Order, and on that account it

can be overlooked? Jesus Christ fulfilled the law precisely unto death: He did not die until He had accomplished all.

25. Have I obeyed cheerfully? At no time shown repugnance, dissatisfaction, suspicion or sadness at a command? Have I grumbled about it or complained to another? Have I immediately repressed and controlled every rising feeling of repugnance?
26. Do I bear in mind that the very repugnance that I feel toward a task must be for me a motive to undertake it cheerfully and to persevere steadfast in it, because I am certain to do, not my will, but the Will of God?
27. Is my obedience simple? Do I look not upon the person who commands, whether she is older, more circumspect, more gentle, in a higher position, agreeable or disagreeable to me, but only upon God Whose place she takes?
28. Have I been troubled about why this or that was ordered or changed? Have I asked about the reasons for a command and wanted to know them before I decided to execute the order?
29. Have I obeyed simply when I was given charge of something for which I thought I was not capable or qualified?

30. Have I under the appearance of obedience sought to do my own will by importuning my Superiors until they gave in to me? Have I in some crafty way sought to attain my object — by pretending to be sad, downcast, or even sickly and ill?
31. Have I interiorly disapproved the commands of the Superiors? Considered them as unreasonable, useless, or even proceeding from partiality against me, or from preference for another?
32. Do I bear well in mind that it is God Who has appointed my Superiors to direct me, that He has therefore bestowed upon them the grace for that purpose, strengthens and enlightens them so that it is for me not only the most meritorious, but also the surest and most reasonable thing to obey with childlike simplicity?
33. Am I convinced that of myself I have not the ability to practice religious obedience? Do I therefore pray often and earnestly for this grace?

III.

On Poverty

1. What is my disposition with regard to poverty? Do I love and esteem it as the bulwark of the religious life, as the foundation of perfection?
2. When a privation or a sacrifice is hard for me, do I look upon my poor Redeemer Whom I desire to imitate and honor through the practice of poverty? Do I take well to heart the thought that Christ, Whom heaven and earth serve, loved poverty so much that He chose it as the inseparable companion of His life; that He selected a poor virgin for His mother, a workman as His foster-father, a manger for His cradle, the rough cross as His deathbed; that during His sojourn upon earth He had not whereon to lay His head?
3. Am I satisfied with the actual poverty which I have chosen? Does the simple manner in which the community provides for my necessities satisfy me?

4. Do I consider well that I am a daughter of the poor man of Assisi, and therefore a poor manner of life is fitting for me? In food, clothing and mode of life do I claim only that which is necessary for the maintenance of my health, in order to be able to employ it in the service of God? In food, clothing and care do I desire something else than that which is given to me?
5. Have I violated the exterior poverty to which I am in duty bound by my state of life and my vows? Do I possess, use or keep anything without the knowledge and will of the Superior? Have I, without permission, disposed of something, lent or borrowed something? Have I used that which was given to me for the purpose for which it was given? Have I failed against holy poverty by eating or drinking at the wrong time without permission?
6. Have I, through my fault, allowed anything to spoil or go to waste? Have I taken proper care of that which was entrusted to me? Have I, through negligence, damaged furniture, books, clothes, etc., or let them be ruined?
7. Have I received any personal presents?
8. Do I strive for uniformity in everything with my Sisters? Have I, under some pretext, be

it illness or weakness, intercourse with the world, etc., allowed myself something special in food or clothing, and that without the knowledge and will of the Superior? Have I forced the Superior to grant me the permission for it?

9. Have I contemptuously left unused that which was given to me in the way of food and clothing, or the necessary objects for my post, as if they were not good enough for me? Have I, without permission, changed them or provided myself with others according to my own opinion?
10. Have I likewise striven for the spirit of poverty by interior detachment from everything? Do I gladly bear the consequences of poverty? Do I bear well in mind that exterior poverty alone does not make one virtuous and holy, and that it is only those who have the spirit, the love of holy poverty that can lay claim to the promises of Christ? Am I aware of the fact that it is a sort of hypocrisy to make a display of poverty exteriorly, without possessing the spirit of it, or at least endeavoring to acquire it?
11. Do I trouble myself about temporal things? In this do I give myself up entirely to Divine

Providence, which will the better care for me the more I honor it by confidence?

12. Have I the smallest inordinate attachment for relatives, friends, Sisters, pupils?
13. Do I complain, or am I dissatisfied or troubled when something is wanting to me?
14. Do I often call to mind the truth that every attachment to earthly things separates me from that love which will constitute my happiness for all eternity?
15. Do I zealously aspire to love and desire that which is characteristic of poverty and is the lot of the poor: lowly and arduous work, a refusal to some request, a mean looking garment, one already worn by another or one that does not fit, a privation in food, clothing, heating or the like; the inconveniences of the cold, heat, or damp unpleasant weather, the irksomeness of the work, a disregard or slight etc.? Without this my exterior perhaps gives the impression of poverty, but the virtue does not exist in my heart.
16. Do I make use of the means to acquire the spirit of poverty: prayer, consideration of the example of Christ and the saints, meditation on the nothingness and transitoriness of all that is earthly?

IV.

On the Works of Charity

1. What is my disposition with regard to the practice of the works of charity in which my community engages? Do I value and esteem them? Do I consider it a great happiness and an undeserved honor that God has called me to the community of the Sisters of Christian Charity? Do I regard the exercises of the works of charity as the aim of my vocation? As a means to prove my love for God and to advance in perfection?
2. Am I conceited about my deeds of charity? Do I use them as a pretext to neglect my religious duties, the spiritual exercises and prayer? Or to observe my holy rule less conscientiously?
3. Have I too great an attachment to exterior labors or activities, so that I live in continual distraction, retirement and solitude become burdensome and tedious, or I become dissatisfied when I must change an activity or a house?

4. Am I dissatisfied if I am not used directly for works of charity but must do housework? Do I bear well in mind that through prayer and good intention I have a share in all the works of charity which my community practices, even if I myself must perform only the lowest and most insignificant tasks?
5. Do I endeavor to fulfill the words of Christ, "Be merciful as your Father in Heaven is merciful"? Am I therefore always friendly, obliging and charitable, not only toward such as are agreeable to me and love me, or from whom I receive or expect thanks, but toward all who have been entrusted to my care?
6. Do I endeavor to be especially friendly and obliging toward those who are less well-disposed to me, or are disagreeable and offensive to me? Thereby true love is best recognized.
7. Have I performed the works of charity out of mere natural sympathy? Have I performed them not for my own gratification, but in order to please God?
8. Do I see Christ Himself in those to whom I show kindness? Do I often think of the saying of the Lord, "What you do to the least of My brethren you do unto Me"? Do I remem-

ber this doctrine, especially when I experience indolence, repugnance or sadness? Or when I am in temptation?

9. Have I in my work, sought the esteem, love, admiration or praise of men?
10. Do I in every occupation, in every action cling strongly to the thought, "All for Jesus"? Is this an incentive for me to do all very carefully and to be indifferent to the kind of work assigned me?
11. Do I from time to time make this important point the subject of my particular examen?
12. How do I conduct myself in the presence of the children or the sick in the exercise of the works of charity? Am I gentle, patient, friendly, calm? Do I carefully avoid all impetuous, bitter, offensive words and actions?
13. When I had to assume a serious mien or punish, did I take care that I was not actuated by my natural disposition and self-love?
14. Did I in the works of charity regard the salvation of souls as the principal object? Have I taken care to inspire the children and the sick with love for piety and virtue and to promote their salvation by praying for them and performing my works out of true love?

15. Have I nevertheless not neglected the corporal and temporal necessities, but considered care for them also as a necessary means to the great aim, the furtherance of the eternal welfare of the sick and the children?
16. Am I watchful with regard to the danger for my soul when I am obliged on account of my work to go into the world or to have intercourse with people of the world? Do I often have recourse to God through ejaculatory prayers in order to ask Him for His assistance? Do I observe the rules of modesty and retirement? Do I candidly acquaint my Superiors with the dangers and temptations to which I am exposed?
17. Have I in the instruction of the children adhered strictly to the precepts and admonitions on the education of youth? Do I often read what my holy rule says on this point?
18. How do I conduct myself in the care of the sick? Do I treat them with love and kindness? Do I always help them cheerfully and gladly? Do I ever show, either during the day or at night, that something is too much or too hard for me?
19. Have I from time to time briefly and kindly incited them to patience in suffering, resig-

nation to the holy Will of God, to holy indifference regarding life or death, good health or sickness? To confidence in God? To prayer? Have I in time exhorted them to the reception of the holy Sacraments? To atonement and pardon when I noticed a hostile disposition? To an edifying life in case of recovery, or otherwise, a Christian death?

20. Have I had sympathy with their pains and sufferings? Have I sought to satisfy them in everything without, however, deviating in the least from the orders of the physician?
21. Have I as far as possible avoided what could be harmful or dangerous to the sick, and in caring for them have I observed the greatest cleanliness?

V.

On Sisterly Love

1. How is it with me in regard to the great command of sisterly love? Do I often think of the noble example of Christ Who said, "This is My Commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you"? Do I strive to model my love for my Sisters according to this divine rule?
2. Christ loved us all without self-interest for the honor of His Father and the salvation of our souls; do I strive thus to love my Sisters and to show love to them? Or do I on the contrary, in intercourse with my Sisters and in the acts of charity which I perform for them, seek my own advantage, my natural satisfaction? Is that not the reason why I seek out with preference those who flatter my self-love?
3. Is my love like the love of Christ, universal, i. e. embracing all, excluding none? Have I kept at a distance those who wound my self-

love or in whom I thought I detected a fault?
Have I in my heart an aversion for some one?

4. Have I loved my Sisters — regarding their perfection and happiness as Christ loves them? Have I therefore carefully avoided giving them offense or scandal?
5. Do I love them for the sake of God, for the sake of Christ without consideration for their natural gifts, capabilities, parentage, behaviour; also not because their character agrees with mine, but solely because I see Christ in them and them in Him; because I feel so closely united to them in God; because we are members of the same bond of charity — spouses of Christ?
6. Is my love active, like the love of Christ? Do I show my love to my Sisters by doing for them every possible kindness and performing them in the most loving way? Do I seek opportunities of showing love and of making myself useful? Or do I endeavor to escape from them as from a burden?
7. Have I performed an act of charity with coldness and reluctance, and so shown that I rendered it unwillingly? Did I look for thanks

for my service? Did I refuse a Sister a service because she was ungrateful or unfriendly to me before?

8. Do I avoid all that can disturb perfect harmony and love; unkind conversation, unfriendly words, looks, movements, malicious remarks, humiliating expressions, mocking laughter, stinging witticisms, continuous or annoying vexations, secret working against, etc.?
9. Have I rejected as soon as possible, every unkind thought and suspicion, feeling of repugnance and aversion?
10. Have I, when I had offended a Sister or given her cause for dissatisfaction, immediately or at least before retiring asked for pardon? Have I neglected or postponed this out of pride? Have I put the blame on the other Sister in order to free myself from this duty?
11. Have I forgiven sincerely and truly when I was asked for pardon? Have I reprimanded and reproved the Sister who asked for pardon? Did I keep in my heart any bitterness, aversion, or resentment?
12. Do I cultivate any particular friendship or intimacy with a Sister? Am I convinced that such friendships in a community are ruinous?

Have I, upon discovering in myself such an inclination, immediately torn out the first roots by vigilance, prayer, mortification and avoidance of the occasions?

13. Do I speak in a particularly confidential manner with a Sister, by communicating to her my temptations, difficulties and humiliations?
14. Do I seek out a Sister with special preference? Do I endeavor to be alone with her? Is there a Sister with whom I speak about matters which others should not hear, so that at the approach of a third I change the conversation? Do I communicate any secrets which I do not wish the Superiors to know?
15. In intercourse with the Sisters do I always show Christian affability, esteem, and the cordiality in manner, words and actions which are to be expected of a religious?
16. How do I conduct myself when I must refuse a request of a Sister? Is the refusal made so that she can see that it proceeds from duty only? Do I allow any repugnance or anger, dissatisfaction or harshness to appear?
17. Do I take care to bear the weaknesses of my Sisters with the greatest calmness, patience and love? Have I on the contrary been im-

patient with their faults, and have I complained about them to another?

18. Do I endeavor in the spirit of love to adapt myself, as far as I can and may, to the imperfections and weaknesses of my Sisters? Am I on the contrary one of those who want all to conform to them? Do I desire to be treated with indulgence while I concede or yield to no one?
19. Do I disturb harmony and love by criticising the Superior's way of acting or the customs and the new regulations in the community by disapproving of them and murmuring about them? Upon hearing such conversation did I condemn it?
20. Have I humbly and simply acknowledged my faults in Chapter when I had the misfortune to fail openly against love and obedience, and thereby gave scandal to my Sisters?
21. When I observed in a Sister a serious fault, an obvious temptation, the danger of which she did not realize, did I communicate it secretly to the Superior? Did I do this out of love and with love after first preparing myself for it in prayer? Did I act rather out of passion, with a secret joy because the Sister

formerly was a hindrance to me or had offended me, or because I was averse to her for some reason? Have I exaggerated her faults or kept secret the extenuating circumstances of them?

22. Have I out of human respect omitted to inform Superiors of such occurrences?
23. How did I conduct myself when my faults were communicated to the Superior by another Sister? Was I glad of it, and was I heartily grateful to the one who did it? Or did I give way to sadness, resentment and unkindness? Have I in consequence avoided that Sister, and have I spoken about it to another?
24. Have I indulged in every possible suspicion? Was I troubled and disquieted when I did not know through whom the Superiors had come to know my faults?
25. Have I without permission of the Superior spoken about my temptations with the Sisters or with strangers?
26. Do I carefully avoid all conversation against love and about the faults of the Sisters and persons of the world? Do I pay attention to this point especially in the parlor? Have I called the attention of my Sisters to this when

I saw them fail in it? And when this was of no avail, did I out of sisterly love notify the Superior of it? Did I ever omit this out of human respect?

27. Have I sincerely endeavored to put aside all that makes me disagreeable and troublesome to my Sisters: forwardness, arrogance, rude, impolite manners? Even a well-ordered exterior belongs to the duties of sisterly love.
28. Have I sought to do all in the spirit of love and to see in my neighbors, especially in my Sisters, Christ Himself? If I do this my love is as it should be, supernatural, and hence universal, effective, magnanimous and steadfast.

VI.

On Humility

1. What are my views about humility? Do I consider it as the foundation of the other virtues, as the cardinal virtue, without which no other can exist? Do I therefore strive for humility with all zeal?
2. Do I often think of the example of Christ Who abased Himself and Who in His whole life from the beginning to the end was a model of humility?
3. Do I often remember my nothingness, unworthiness and wretchedness? Am I satisfied to be nothing? Do I mourn and lament because I find in myself only weakness and impotency? Has this made me discouraged, instead of animating my confidence in God?
4. Have I zealously made use of the means for the attainment of humility? Do I love humiliations or at least take them in good part? Have I on the contrary avoided them?

5. How did I conduct myself when I was exteriorly humiliated? When I was considered unfit for a task? My post taken from me? When I had no success in my work and this was noticed? When I was reprov'd? Do I rejoice at such opportunities and thank God for humiliations? Have I borne them quietly and joyfully? Or do I fret, trouble myself about them and yield to distraction?
6. Am I haughty, i. e. do I hold myself in esteem, exalt myself above others, consider myself better than them because of my natural gifts, acquirements, parentage, virtues or other privileges which I believe I possess?
7. Do I always ascribe to God the good that I perhaps find in myself and acknowledge that I have received it only from Him?
8. Have I murmured interiorly and become indignant when I thought I was misunderstood or esteemed lightly by the Superiors or Sisters?
9. Do I submit my judgment to that of the Superiors in all things, even in matters in which I think I have more knowledge and experience than they?
10. Do I know how, as far as my duty does not conflict, to accommodate myself to the opinions of those who possess no authority over me?

11. Am I ready at once to change a sphere of duty which the world esteems for another less regarded, even if others should think that I was not capable or qualified for the higher position?
12. Do I consider some occupations or posts in religious life too low for me?
13. Have I sought the praise and recognition of men? Have I known how to obtain this in a cunning way through affected humility?
14. Have I foolishly considered as true, the praise and flattery which was paid to me and my work? Have I later dwelt upon it with pleasure?
15. Have I in conversation with others sought my own praise? Have I tried to turn the conversation to my accomplishments?
16. How does it affect me when others are praised? Do I think then that my merits are esteemed too low?
17. Do I seek for myself the best in food, clothing, furniture and other necessities?
18. How do I behave when I have fallen into a fault or have broken my resolutions? Do I then humble myself quietly before God and

my Superior, or am I troubled and sad or discouraged? This disposition springs only from self-love and pride.

19. Am I forcibly penetrated with the conviction that without divine grace I am capable of the greatest sins?
20. How do I bear it that others stand higher than I in regard to charges, in the esteem of the Superiors, the Sisters, children and other persons?
21. Do I seek in some way or other to distinguish myself from the other Sisters and to draw attention to myself?
22. Do I gladly take advice from others? Do I also gladly listen to their opinions, even in matters which I think I understand well and which belong to my post?
23. Do I presume to advise others on my own responsibility and to instruct them in spiritual matters?
24. Do I take it into my head to be an important personality in the community? To accomplish much? That one can scarcely or not at all do without me?

25. Do I strive to do all in the spirit of humility, i. e. on the one hand do I do all as well as possible, and on the other, adhere to the conviction that without the help of God and the assistance of His grace all my work turns out faulty on account of my weakness and imperfection?
26. Do I, after I have done my best, expect from God alone the good success of my labor?
27. Am I deeply penetrated with the words of the Lord that, after I have done all, I am an unprofitable servant of the Lord, who has only done her duty?

VII.

On Mortification

1. How is it with me in regard to mortification? Am I convinced of its necessity? "Those who belong to Christ," says St. Paul, "have crucified their flesh together with their vices and their concupiscences." Do I really believe that I will never attain the aim of my holy vocation if I do not zealously apply myself to mortification and do my best to destroy self-love?
2. Do I consider mortification as an excellent means to curb my stubborn flesh, to destroy the serpent of self-love, and to quell rebellious nature?
3. Do I see benefits of God in the opportunities to mortify myself?
4. Am I thoroughly convinced that without continual mortification and judicious self-abnegation I can not keep my soul pure and beautiful in the eyes of God? That therefore my whole life must bear the glorious sign of the cross and crown of thorns of Christ?

5. Do I deceive myself by the vain desire of great corporal mortifications which lie outside the holy rule or are entirely contrary to it, while I neglect the little mortifications which the holy rule imposes upon me and which my charge brings with it?
6. Do I often seek to overcome myself exteriorly in little things, as is becoming to a religious?
7. Do I mortify my eyes by usually casting them down and not allowing them to roam frivolously over my surroundings? Or by now and then denying myself the sight of something beautiful and attractive? Am I especially intent on turning away my eyes from all that can be in any way dangerous to me? At prayer, in the choir, and in the chapel do I endeavor to avert my glance from all that can be an occasion for distraction or irreverence?
8. Do I mortify my hearing by not listening curiously to hear whether I am spoken of and by closing my ear to frivolous news or worldly speech?
9. Do I mortify my sense of taste by making no distinction in food, by not taking the largest or best for myself, by not eating or

drinking greedily? By abstaining sometimes from a savory dish, by not voluntarily taking delight in a sensuous way in the pleasant taste of food and drink?

10. Do I mortify my sense of feeling by not yielding to sensuality in my carriage, in sitting and lying? By putting up with cold, heat, and unpleasant weather, by not pampering myself, by suffering patiently, pain and privation, by not immediately complaining about it? Or have I out of a wrong love for mortification or out of human respect omitted to inform my Superior of my indisposition?
11. Do I mortify my speech by faithfully observing silence? By not speaking hastily and impetuously? By not interrupting others? By not speaking of myself as a rule? Further by keeping back something that just occurs to my mind and which I should like to say? Above all, by refraining from conversation about worldly matters and family affairs, as well as those which wound charity?
12. How is it with me as to interior mortification? Do I zealously make use of the opportunities of practicing it?

13. Have I a particular desire for the lowest, humblest and least esteemed tasks? Do I seek those occupations which are the most contrary to my natural inclination?
14. How do I conduct myself when I am contradicted, be it on the part of the Superior, the Sisters, or other persons? When I meet an opposition in my work? When I am disturbed or called away during the time of prayer or of some urgent work? When I must endure pain or contempt? When I must give up or change an occupation or a connection that is agreeable to me? When against my inclination I am removed to another house? In general, when my self-love or self-will has been offended? Do I then mortify myself? On such occasions do I recognize gladly and gratefully the holy will of God, which sends all for my best, that I may become like Jesus and share in His merits? Or do I become impatient and downcast? Do I even consider myself unfortunate because I can not have my will?
15. Do I also practice mortification of my thoughts, by turning them away from worldly remembrances? By not voluntarily occupying them with matters which do not concern me? By thinking often of God and spiritual things?

16. Do I seek my own satisfaction either in my work or in the spiritual exercises and prayer?
17. Do I remember to thank God when a mortification is imposed upon me?
18. Have I made use of the means to acquire the spirit of mortification, prayer, meditation on the example of Christ and the saints, thought of the great benefit of my vocation and the graces and merits which are attached to it?

VIII.

On Meekness

1. What do I think of the virtue of meekness?
Do I esteem and love it as I ought to love a virtue which we should endeavor to acquire, according to the words of the Divine Redeemer, "Learn of Me, for I am meek" etc.?
2. Have I striven earnestly to become meek of heart, according to the example and command of the Lord?
3. Do I carefully guard myself from ill-humor and outbursts of passion?
4. Am I impetuous and repulsive in my replies, especially when I am disturbed or annoyed in my work, which I must then interrupt?
5. Have I used sharp, offensive or humiliating expressions when speaking to the Sisters or children?
6. Have I punished the children out of passion only because they had disturbed or annoyed me?

7. Have I in excitement punished more severely than the transgression merited? Do I consider well what scandal I can thereby give?
8. Have I called the attention of my Sisters to something in an impetuous way with harsh, unkind words, or reprimanded them for something?
9. Have I given hasty answers and excuses when my attention was called to something? When I was reprimanded or humiliated?
10. Have I been unwilling and impetuous in my work? Did I become impatient when it did not succeed?
11. In recreation do I avoid as much as possible all dispute about indifferent things? Do I immediately become excited and agitated when I am not given in to? Do I stubbornly insist on my opinion? When I opposed someone did I do it with calmness and meekness?
12. In speaking, in manner or under other circumstances do I show impetuosity or violence of any kind?
13. Do I become angry or impatient at the faults and weaknesses of my Sisters, at their awkwardness in the work with which they should help me?

14. Do I strive zealously to overcome every interior displeasure and inclination to passion, and to eradicate their roots?
15. Do I strive to possess my soul in patience and to acquire that indifference which is so necessary to me in my work?
16. Do I strive earnestly to overcome the inconstancy of my disposition?
17. Do I strive too forcibly and impatiently to see my Sisters and the children free from a fault? Do I become discouraged when my efforts to correct them do not immediately have success?
18. Do I become angry with myself when I fall back into a fault? Do I then give in to despondency and discouragement? After a fall do I renew my resolutions with quiet confidence?
19. Am I thoroughly convinced that meekness is absolutely necessary in order that I may have influence over the hearts of others and promote the salvation of their souls? Do I think perhaps that I gain more by impetuosity and anger?
20. Does the impetuosity of my character serve as a pretext to free me from striving for meek-

ness? Do I imagine that meekness is something that cannot be attained by me?

21. Do I seek to avoid the occasions of passions and anger as much as possible? Do I absent myself, if possible, when I perceive that anger makes itself felt in me? Is it my rule of conduct never to speak and act when I am violently excited, but to wait until I am quiet again?
22. Do I bear in mind that God permits the faults of others in order to try me and to give me an occasion for the practice of patience?
23. Do I often recall the example of the gentle Christ and beg Him earnestly for the virtue of meekness?

IX.

On Prayer and the Spiritual Exercises

1. How is it with me in regard to prayer? Do I esteem and love it as an essential obligation, a necessary means, without which I can not obtain the grace needed to fulfill the duties of my vocation?
2. In difficulties, temptations and doubts do I immediately have recourse to prayer?
3. Do I allow myself to be deterred from prayer because I experience in it no satisfaction, no consolation, but am molested by foolish thoughts?
4. Do I always properly prepare myself for prayer according to the admonition of the Holy Ghost by placing myself in the presence of God and humbling myself before Him, acknowledging my unworthiness? This is a powerful means to secure a favorable hearing.
5. Do I pray with simplicity and confidence? Do I endeavor to tell God what my heart suggests?

6. Do I pray with perseverance? Or do I set the time for God to hear my prayer?
7. Do I strive to ask for all according to the example of Holy Church, in the name of Christ and through His merits? Thus our prayers become more pleasing to God and are more surely heard.
8. Do I ask for necessary and beneficial things, e. g. grace to overcome my passions, to correct my faults? Or do I pray for extraordinary graces which serve only to flatter my self-love?
9. Am I not myself the cause of my prayers not being heard, because I perform without devotion and fervor, merely from habit?
10. Have I neglected my prayers or postponed them without a good reason, particularly those which must be performed at a definite time?
11. Have I not experienced that in consequence of this postponement I have later performed them less well, even superficially, or omitted them entirely?
12. Have I as far as possible taken care to guard my senses during prayer and especially not to turn my eyes toward distracting objects?

13. Have I endeavored to bring back my thoughts to God and the subject of my prayer when distraction had taken possession of me?
14. Did I become discouraged when I was greatly annoyed with distractions and on account of this dejection have I given up the struggle against distraction?
15. Whence come generally the distractions and difficulties which I meet with during prayer? Have they not their cause in an inordinate attachment to relatives or other persons? Or, even in an excessive attachment to my post, my work, in a too great concern about this or that matter? Perhaps they originate in pride or self-love, in an anxious care to please others, to gain their favor through this or that work? Or do they spring from injured self-love, in that after a humiliation, an abasement or a refusal, I occupy myself again with it?
16. Am I not myself the cause of my distractions by allowing my thoughts too great liberty and by occupying myself with persons and matters which do not concern me?
17. Have I a great regard for the prayers and spiritual exercises which the holy rule prescribes? Do I endeavor to perform them all faithfully?

18. Is my first thought in the morning directed to God and my first act the sign of the cross? Do I immediately recommend myself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and recall to mind the points of the meditations and the particular examen?
19. How do I keep the meditation? Do I observe the admonitions and the advice which have been given to me on this important exercise? Do I endeavor especially in the evening and in the morning to be very recollected and to avoid every voluntary distraction?
20. Do I use for meditation the whole time set for this holy exercise? Or do I spend it in parts without doing anything at all?
21. Have I a great regard for the Holy Office? Do I strive to perform it with reverence and devotion? Do I take pains to pronounce the words well?
22. How do I assist at Holy Mass? Do I value greatly the happiness of being able to assist daily at the Holy Sacrifice? Am I present at it with great purity of heart, as well as with exterior reverence and devotion, in dignified and modest mien?

23. How do I keep the visits to the Blessed Sacrament? Do I speak simply and confidentially with Jesus about my necessities, struggles, temptations, all my interior and exterior anxieties?
24. Do I say my morning and evening prayers zealously? Do I pray the Rosary every day devoutly?
25. Are the powerful ejaculatory prayers familiar to me during the day? Have I the custom of invoking the Holy Ghost before spiritual reading, and of raising my heart to God from time to time during reading?
26. Do I pray for those whom God has entrusted to my care and to that of the community? Do I also pray especially for those who have caused me annoyances in any way, or against whom I am sensible of a feeling of aversion, be it Sisters or children?
27. Do I pray also for all for whom I am bound to pray: Superiors, relatives, confessors, benefactors, etc.

X.

On Confidence in God

1. How about my confidence in God? Have I a boundless trust in God and do I expect all from Him, as well for myself as for others?
2. Am I thoroughly convinced that I run more risk of trusting too little in God than too much?
3. Do I practice confidence according to the will of God by endeavoring to do all that lies in my power?
4. Do I bear in mind that by voluntary mistrust I cause the most loving heart of my Divine Bridegroom a grievous offense?
5. Do I take pains to combat all despondency and mistrust? Do I consider this fault as the source of many others?
6. Do I remember that my confidence as well as my faith must be supernatural, that it should not rest upon natural motives, e. g. my ability for this or that task, the strength of my resolutions, the patronage and assistance of men,

my merits and the like, but on the omnipotence and goodness of God?

7. Have I practiced confidence when a difficult task or a dreaded post was assigned to me? Have I then, considering my weakness and inability, given in to despondency or mistrust?
8. Have I also practiced confidence in regard to temporal things by having no care for my personal necessities in clothing, food, cell, etc.? Have I trusted in God by having no concern about the temporal affairs of my relatives? Have I grieved too much about their spiritual interests? Am I resolved to pray much and earnestly, though with a quiet mind?
9. How do I conduct myself when I become aware of a fault which till now I did not perceive? Have I then turned to God in simplicity in order to humble myself before Him and beg for pardon?
10. Do I yield to despondency when I consider the high perfection for which I as a religious am bound to strive? Further the struggle against my corrupted nature which I must fight until my last breath?
11. Have I the firm confidence that God in spite of my weakness, faults, and frailty will help

me to attain the perfection to which He has called me?

12. Do I imagine that my former sins are an obstacle in the attainment of perfection? That therefore God will help me less or my prayers will not be received so agreeably?
13. Does the thought of my former unfaithfulness in religious life lessen my confidence in God? Is that perhaps often the reason that I neglect to make good resolutions, that I do not renew them when I have fallen, or that I do not persevere courageously in them?
14. Do I pray with confidence? Do I firmly believe that God has a great desire to give me all that I ask for in the name of Jesus Christ? Do I often think of the promises of Christ in the Gospel respecting prayer?
15. Do I become discouraged and mistrustful when God does not seem to hear me or does not immediately grant my request?
16. Have I practiced confidence in the reception of the Sacrament of Penance? Have I, despite the command of the confessor, been disquieted about former sins?

17. Have I the firm confidence that God will guide me, through the confessor, and will not permit me to go wrong if I simply and sincerely follow his advice? That I will not go astray if I obey those to whom He has said: "Who hears you, hears Me"?
18. Have I after confession made anxious, disquieting inquiries as to whether I said all, whether the confessor understood rightly, whether my sins were forgiven, and the like?
19. Am I animated with great confidence especially after the reception of Holy Communion and at Holy Mass? Do I bear in mind that this is the most precious, the most suitable for obtaining all from God?

XI.

On the Observance of the Holy Rule

1. Have I a great reverence and esteem for the Holy Rule? Do I consider it as the most suitable means to attain the perfection of my state, as a means which by the authority of Holy Church in the name of God has been recognized, approved and established as such?
2. Do I manifest reverence for the Holy Rule perhaps more by words than by faithful observance? "Not all who say, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of Heaven" — and also not all who admire the Holy Rule and find it beautiful are perfect religious.
3. Do I zealously strive to keep faithfully the regulations and precepts of my Holy Rule, however troublesome and disagreeable it may be to me?
4. Have I endeavored to acquire the spirit of the Holy Rule, to adapt my inclinations and actions entirely to it, to practice the virtues which are recommended to me therein?

5. Am I thoroughly convinced that I can not better serve God and be more pleasing to Him than by exact observance of the Holy Rule?
6. Do I believe that I advance the more in perfection the more exactly and zealously I keep the Holy Rule?
7. Do I seek perfection outside the Holy Rule?
8. Do I imagine that I am very zealous because I desire to do great things for God, while I neglect the small and unimportant things which He desires from me through the Holy Rule?
9. Do I place self-chosen devotions and exercises above those which the Holy Rule prescribes or recommends to me?
10. Do I perform the exercises and prayers of the Holy Rule with haste, precipitation and indifference, in order to gain time for my self-chosen devotional exercises?
11. Do I take pains to do all zealously, even the smallest and most trifling things which the Holy Rule prescribes?
12. Do I consider well that in the true service of God nothing is small or insignificant, but all becomes great if it is done out of love of God?

That therefore a great reward, yes, a degree of eternal glory is reserved to the observance of the apparently smallest things?

13. Has it become my custom to transgress the Holy Rule in one or the other point?
14. In what have my violations of the Holy Rule their source? In attachment to my self-will? In the dread of mortification? In a too great concern for my work? Perhaps even in indifference or disregard?
15. Do I fail sometimes out of culpable ignorance of the Holy Rule, because I neglect to learn to know it by frequent attentive reading?
16. Do I often read my Holy Rule outside of the public reading?
17. Have I by violation of the Holy Rule given scandal to my Sisters, or occasion to fail against it, in that I spoke to them during silence without necessity, or in recreation spoke with them about things which are not befitting a religious?
18. Have I enough steadfastness to remain faithful to my duty, if a Sister should induce me to a violation of the Holy Rule? Do I then allow myself to be influenced and governed by human respect?

19. Do I free myself from the duty of keeping my Holy Rule faithfully, even in the smallest things, except there be just reason?
20. Do I easily ask for some dispensation or other? Do I annoy my Superiors, even compel them by my behavior to allow me my dispensations or exceptions?
21. Do I imagine that I have a right to have this or that dispensation, or to be less exact in the keeping of the Holy Rule, because I have already been long in the community and think that I have performed many services for it?
22. Do I rise in the morning at the first signal? Do I betake myself as soon as possible to the chapel in order to beg God for His assistance and to offer up myself entirely to Him?
23. Do I ever absent myself from a community exercise except with the permission of the Superior, or on account of matters which suffer no postponement?
24. Do I take care to be on time at all the exercises? For prayer? At table? For recreation?
25. Do I perform the work assigned to me according to the precepts and admonitions of the Holy Rule? Do I strive to examine and to adapt my conduct according to these precepts?

XII.

On Silence and the Recreation

1. What do I think about silence? Do I consider this regulation as one of the important points of the Holy Rule, because the discipline and order, regularity and good spirit of the congregation as well as that of each Sister depends on the observance of it?
2. Do I understand well how important this rule is? On this account because I must observe it throughout the entire day and can fail against it often and much, if I do not value it highly?
3. Do I love silence as a means to practice recollection, to keep alive in me the spirit of devotion and prayer, and to have interior intercourse with God?
4. Do I bear well in mind from how many sins of the tongue silence preserves me, and how many merits I can earn by the mortifications connected with it?
5. Do I consider it an obligation never to deviate from the regulations of silence? Have I ob-

served them faithfully outside of recreation? Have I spoken not even one single word, if it was not necessary or useful, or my work and occupation did not demand it?

6. When I spoke, have I always done so in a low voice? And not longer than was necessary? On such occasions do I avoid turning the conversation upon other useless things?
7. Have I broken silence by making signs to others without necessity, by laughing, or in any other way, causing them distractions?
8. Have I failed against silence by disturbing the quiet and stillness which the Holy Rule prescribes? Have I as much as possible avoided all unnecessary noise and din, e. g. violently opening and closing doors, loud walking on the stairs and in the corridors, overturning or forcibly putting down of objects, noise with implements and the like?
9. Have I faithfully observed silence especially in the places where continual silence is prescribed, e. g. in the chapel, in the cell?
10. Have I during the time of silence, especially endeavored to practice great recollection? Do I allow my eyes too much freedom by letting them wander about curiously?

11. Have I taken pains to speak in a becoming way? Have I avoided the faults to which the Holy Rule calls attention? Am I hasty in speaking? Do I interrupt anyone?
12. Do I speak respectfully with priests, Superiors, and older Sisters? In intercourse with the Sisters do I observe the rules of Christian charity and politeness?
13. In conversation with strangers and persons of the world do I ever lose sight of the prudence, modesty, and decorum which is befitting to me as a religious?
14. In what spirit do I take part in recreation? Do I sanctify it by a pure intention, namely, in order to gain new strength for my body, to make the soul more capable for the service of God, to be able to perform my work well and to promote mutual love?
15. Do I perhaps consider the time of recreation as a time in which I do not need to practice watchfulness over myself or mortify myself, and may allow my senses and inclinations every liberty?
16. Do I bear in mind that I remain a religious during the time of recreation and therefore

must use it for my perfection, must seek to please God in it and treasure up merits?

17. Did I stay away from recreation because I was sad or not in good humor? Or because it did not please me? Or because I would rather pray, work or be alone? Or out of excessive anxiety for my work?
18. Have I in recreation avoided the faults against which the Holy Rule warns? Have I conversed about family affairs, worldly things, or news of the day?
19. Do I speak about spiritual and edifying subjects, or do I like to hear them spoken of? Have I readily interrupted such conversation? A tongue which does not like to speak of God betrays a heart that loves Him little.
20. Have I especially guarded against what can wound charity? Have I used unkind, bitter, sarcastic words? Have I spoken unkindly of children or persons of the world? Have I, in a jesting way, said the truth to anyone out of revenge or anger?
21. Have I contributed as much as possible to make the recreation pleasant? Did I yield to ill-humor and sadness?

22. Do I easily take ill a remark which is made to me? Do I then pass the whole time in silence out of wounded self-love?
23. Do I in recreation always keeps the best place or near that Sister who suits me best?
24. Do I boast, so that the Sisters must keep still before me?
25. Do I seek with preference that Sister whom I perhaps knew in the world, with whom I share a post, or with whom I agree in character?
26. Have I allowed it to be noticed when someone was annoying and irksome to me, and so humiliated and confused the Sisters?
27. Am I in recreation too boisterous and distracted, so that I entirely lose the spirit of recollection and devotion?
28. Do I often spend the whole time of recreation without recalling the presence of God?
29. Do I so conduct myself during recreation that Jesus and His Holy Mother could be present without reluctance?

XIII.

On the First Day of the Annual Retreat

1. With what disposition have I begun this retreat? Do I consider it as a special proof of the goodness and love of God, Who gives me the grace to occupy myself exclusively with Him and the affairs of my soul?
2. Do I understand the necessity of the retreat, so that I can renew the right spirit within me, purify myself from my faults and sins, and lead a holy life?
3. Am I ready to give my whole heart to God without reservation? Can I at this moment say sincerely, as St. Paul did, "Lord, what wilt Thou that I should do?"
4. May I with David add, "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready"?
5. Have I the firm purpose to use this retreat for my spiritual profit?
6. Do I bear in mind that it may be the last for me, and am I determined to keep it as such?

7. Do I understand that God, through this retreat gives me a great proof of His desire to lead me to perfection and eternal happiness? Indeed, He gives me one of the most powerful means to become entirely converted to Him, to raise myself from my sins and weaknesses, and to lead a holy life. The retreat is an extraordinary grace which is not given to thousands.
8. Have I the firm confidence that God Who gives me this retreat, will also bestow upon me the necessary grace to use it for my sanctification?
9. Have the exertions, the retirement and solitude which are connected with the spiritual exercises filled my corrupt nature with fear? Have I given in to this fear?
10. Do I allow myself to be discouraged by the thought of the little fruit I have derived from former retreats, or by the dryness which I experience now?
11. Do I even feel repugnance toward the retreat from fear that God may demand from me a sacrifice, a self-denial which my depraved nature might find too difficult, and for which I am not willing?

12. Am I firmly resolved to use the necessary means to derive great profit from the spiritual exercises?
13. Am I firmly determined to observe silence strictly and to perform all the exercises which the order of the day prescribes?
14. Have I removed from mind and heart all that can distract me? Do I occupy myself with thoughts about work, Sisters or children?
15. Have I resolved upon some mortifications for the retreat?
16. Am I firmly determined to pray much and earnestly with childlike, steadfast confidence?
17. Do I intend now to perform my prayers and spiritual exercises with special zeal and all possible devotion in order to make up for the negligences committed in the course of the year and to implore the blessing of God upon the retreat?
18. Am I firmly resolved to apply to myself the truths explained in the meditations and conferences, to examine whether I regulate my life according to them, and to form resolutions referring to this for the future?

19. Have I the firm, generous purpose to leave myself entirely to God and His love?
20. Am I determined to ask God for enlightenment, that I may understand myself more and more and discover the passions which are the greatest hindrance to my progress, in order to fight against them henceforth with new courage?
21. Am I careful to make not only entirely general good resolutions, but to direct them upon special, definite points? Is it my intention to depend not only upon my own efforts, but with great mistrust recommend myself to the all-powerful assistance of the merciful God and to the protection of the ever blessed Virgin Mary?

A. M. D. G.



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